

Devotional Studies No. 23

What Do You Think about the Christ

Are you committed to Christ? Does Christ make a difference in your life? What does the Incarnation of Christ mean to you? Are you conscious that in the Incarnation one sees the entrance of God into the sphere of humanity? When you look upon Christ, is the human “I” dethroned. The wonder of it all is that in Jesus, God broke through His own law in order to save fallen humanity. In other words, God broke through the curse of the law with His presence in and through Jesus the Messiah. It is through faith in Jesus that God meets humanity and, at the same time, allows humanity to meet Him. The eternal Son takes upon Himself human nature in order to redeem lost men and women. It is in and through Jesus that one knows God. As one contemplates upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, one is continuously reminded that God is love. He is the initiator of salvation, not men and women. This love is a love that seeks.

What does Christ mean to you? What do you think about the Christ? For almost two thousand years, men and women have searched for an answer to that question. In examining this controversy, one is confronted with various responses down through the centuries. Why is this question so important? One’s eternal destiny depends upon a proper reaction to this discussion. Is He God or man? Did He preexist before becoming man? Is He eternal? These are questions that one must solve in seeking a solution to the question that Jesus asked the Pharisees: **“What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he” (Matthew 22:42)**? The apostles relentlessly preached Jesus Christ as the Savior of humanity. Remember, God comes to men and women through Jesus. Humanity does not find a way to God, but rather God comes to humanity in and through Jesus to offer salvation by grace through faith in Jesus the Christ. What do you think about the Christ?

Do you believe the following words of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning” (**John 1:1-2**). Was He really the Son of God? Did He leave heaven and come down to this world for a purpose? Did He come to seek and save the lost? A proper answer to these questions should assist one in making the correct reply to the question: **“What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” (Matthew 22:42)**. If one is not wrapped in wonder and struck with awe and impelled to bow in adoration of Jesus’ love, one’s faith is lodged only in one’s mind. In other words, his or her faith has not penetrated into his or her heart. Is the preaching of Christ the message of inspiration in your life? Have you lost sight of the object and center of Jesus’ message to a lost and dying world? Christ is the theme of the Old and New Testament writings. Have you accepted God’s invitation to share in that glorious kingdom prophesied by the prophets of the Old Testament and announced in the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus?

If one considers anything and everything more important than Jesus Christ and His message of salvation, then one is on the wrong track? One of Jesus' disciples writes: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning" (**John 1:1-2**). What does this Scripture mean to you? As one begins this quest for answers to the question that Jesus asked the Pharisees, one, too, may start with Luke's Gospel. Luke narrates some political history leading up to the birth of Jesus. This story is not legend; it is embedded in history. He informs Theophilus that Caesar Augustus had issued a decree for a census of the Roman world and that Quirinius was governor of Syria (**Luke 2:1-2**). He also fills in additional historical information about the events leading up to God becoming flesh. He composes the following account leading up to the birth of Jesus:

Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (**Luke 2:4-7**)

How did John react to this birth? He goes right to the very heart of the matter: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (**John 1:14**). Matthew, as well, writes about the miraculous conception of Mary through the Holy Spirit (**Matthew 1:18**). In order to give weight, or authority, to the truthfulness of this assertion, he cites a prophecy of Isaiah (**7:14**) concerning the virgin birth of Jesus, a prediction made seven hundred years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea—born not in a palace, but born in a manger. Jesus left the grandeur of heaven for a crown of thorns; He left the glory of heaven for a shameful death on a tree. The death and resurrection of Jesus fills the hearts of the early disciples in their proclamation about Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. Just a perusal of the New Testament books displays the focus of the disciples' preaching. For example, Paul, approximately twenty-five years after the crucifixion, captures in poetic language, as he drives home, the sacrifice of the One who became flesh.

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (**Philippians 2:5-8**)

Have you accepted Jesus as your Savior? As one contemplates the uniqueness of Jesus, one is confronted daily with Jesus' question to the Pharisees about Himself: "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" (**Matthew 22:42**). What do you think about the Christ as a teacher? How do you react to His message about Himself as God's way of salvation? How do you react to His Sermon on the Mount? About three years earlier than this pinpointed question by Jesus, Matthew makes known how the people reacted to His Sermon on the Mount: "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law" (**Matthew 7:28-29**). Do you stand in amazement and

admiration of the Sermon on the Mount?

Jesus delivered this Sermon after the imprisonment of John the Baptist (**Matthew 4:12**). Jesus then returned to Galilee and began to preach, “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near**” (**Matthew 4:17**). How did the people react to His message? Once more, Matthew informs his readers that Jesus, following the selecting of His disciples, “went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Good News of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people (**Matthew 4:23**). The people responded overwhelmingly to Jesus’ ministry (**4:23-25**). The miracles Jesus performed should increase everyone’s faith in Jesus as the Son of God. On one occasion, Jesus said to the unbelievers: “Even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father” (**John 10:38**).

All over again, what does the Sermon on the Mount mean to you? Have you read the entire Book of Matthew recently? Matthew’s book details many events that surround Jesus’ teaching throughout Galilee. The most notable and outstanding of all the examples found in Matthew’s writings is found in His Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5-7**). After reading this Sermon, how do you respond to Jesus’ question to the Pharisees? You know this Sermon, do you not? One cannot read this Sermon without standing in amazement, as did the people who heard Him. Christ’s parables also dominate the scene of His public ministry. What about His parables? Do you remember any of His parables? Have you reflected recently upon His many parables? One of His most memorable parables, the Prodigal Son, is still reflected upon as one reflects upon God’s forgiveness. Again, the question: What do you think of the Christ?